Early Years Foundation Stage Policy
September 2026

Nominated Lead Member of Staff: Hannah Dickson

Status & Review Cycle: Bi-annual

Next Review Date: September 2028

Introduction

"All children deserve the care and support they need to have the best start in life. Children learn and develop at a faster rate from birth to five years old than at any other time in their lives, so their experiences in early years have a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe, and happy childhood is important in its own right. Good parenting and high quality early learning provide the foundation children need to fulfil their potential." The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, DfE, September 2026.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the Reception year.

At Shalford Infant & Nursery School, our Early Years provision is delivered in accordance with the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage for group and school-based providers, September 2026, together with other relevant statutory guidance and legislation.

This policy sets out how we provide a high-quality, inclusive and safe Early Years education for all children in our Nursery and Reception classes. It should be read alongside the school's other relevant policies and procedures, including our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy, SEND Policy, Attendance Policy, Health and Safety Policy, Intimate Care Policy and Assessment Policy. We recognise that parents and carers are children's first and most enduring educators and that effective partnership with families is essential to supporting children's learning, development, health and wellbeing.

The school will ensure that Early Years provision meets the individual needs of children, including children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and will make reasonable adjustments where necessary to enable children to participate fully in the life of the school.

Our Early Years Provision

At Shalford Infant and Nursery School, our Nursery can accommodate a maximum of 24 children per session. We offer two attendance options to suit the needs of families:

- **30 hours** per week: Children attend **5 full days.**
- **15 hours** per week: Children attend **2.5 days,** Monday to Wednesday morning **or** Wednesday afternoon to Friday.

We are committed to being inclusive and supportive of all children. For children with additional needs**,** we will consider other attendance options to ensure their individual needs are met effectively.

Our Reception class welcomes children at the beginning of the school year. We recognise that starting

school is a significant transition for young children and their families, and that each child will respond differently to this change.

To support a positive and secure transition into school, parents/carers may be offered the option for their child to attend Reception on a part-time basis for an agreed period at the beginning of the school year. Any part-time arrangement will b6e discussed and agreed with parents/carers and the school prior to the child starting.

This flexible approach enables children to become familiar with their new environment, teachers, peers and daily routines at a pace that supports their individual needs. It provides opportunities for children to develop confidence, independence and a sense of belonging, while supporting their emotional security as they begin their formal education.

The school will work closely with parents/carers to review each child's transition and consider when the child is ready to move towards their full-time Reception timetable. Decisions will take account of the child's individual circumstances, wellbeing, confidence and ability to engage positively with the school environment.

Our aim is to ensure that every child experiences a welcoming, nurturing and inclusive start to school, enabling them to develop positive relationships, feel safe and secure, and become confident learner

Our vision

At Shalford Infant & Nursery School, in the Early Years, we strive to nurture happy, confident, and well-rounded individuals with an unquenchable love for learning. Our vision is to create a safe, nurturing, and enabling environment where every child feels valued and has the opportunity to thrive.

We recognise that each child is unique, and therefore, we ensure that all teaching and learning experiences are tailored to their i-dividual needs and interests. Our goal is to inspire children to be:

- **Curious**: Encouraging them to explore the world around them with wonder and enthusiasm.
- **Challenged**: Motivating them to embrace challenges as opportunities for growth.
- **Resilient**: Supporting them to bounce back from setbacks and persist in their learning journey.
- **Problem-solvers**: Equipping them with the skills to think critically and independently.

We believe in fostering a positive mindset, where children take pride in their accomplishments and celebrate their achievements, no matter how great or small. At Shalford, we aim to lay the foundations for lifelong learning, instilling in each child the confidence and curiosity to excel in everything that they do.

Our Aims

At Shalford Infant & Nursery School, our Early Years provision is designed to support children in their development, learning, and transition through the foundational stages of education. Our aims are:

- **Smooth Transitions**:
    - Support children in making a smooth transition from home to school.
    - Help children transition seamlessly from a Nursery/Pre-school setting into Reception.
    - Ensure a smooth transition for all children from Early Years to Key Stage One.
- **Strong Relationships**: Build strong, positive relationships with all children based on mutual respect**,** fostering a sense of trust and security.
- **Skilled Staff**: Ensure all staff have a solid understanding of how children develop and learn, which is reflected in their teaching and interactions with children.
- **Staff Expertise**: Ensure staff are confident in discussing the progress, strengths, and needs of the children in their care.
- **Engaging Learning Experiences**: Provide a variety of learning opportunities that excite, engage, and motivate children, stimulating their natural curiosity.
- **Learning Through Play**: Extend and develop children’s learning through play, engaging in meaningful conversations that build on their ideas and interests.

- **Personalised Curriculum**: Carefully and effectively plan and adapt our curriculum to meet the individual needs of the children, considering their starting points, experiences, and progress.
- **Achieving Early Learning Goals**: Support children to reach the expected levels in the Early Learning Goals by the end of Reception, through thorough and thoughtful curriculum planning.
- **Ongoing Assessment**: Regularly observe and assess children's progress and future learning needs, sharing these with parents and carers to ensure ongoing collaboration and support.
- **Targeted Support**: Identify areas where children may need additional support and implement opportunities and interventions that address those needs.
- **Child-led Learning**: Provide learning experiences that are guided by the children's interests**,** helping to make learning relevant and engaging.
- **Risk-taking and Exploration**: Give children opportunities to assess and take risks in a safe environment**,** encouraging them to explore and interact with their surroundings.
- **Reflective Learners**: Encourage children to reflect on their own learning, fostering self-awareness and promoting a positive attitude towards learning.
- **Indoor and Outdoor Learning**: Ensure children have access to rich and varied learning opportunities both inside and outside, supporting all areas of development.
- **School Values**: Begin teaching children the school's core values, encouraging them to embody these values in their daily lives.
    - In **Nursery**, the values taught are: **resilience, respect, kindness, honesty, and responsibility**.
    - In **Reception**, the values extend to include: **gratitude, cooperation, empathy, tolerance, and courage** in addition to those taught in Nursery.
- **Ongoing Staff Development**: Regularly identify training needs for staff to support continuous professional development and enhance the quality of provision.

Through these aims, we ensure that each child at Shalford Infant & Nursery School has the best possible start, with a strong foundation for future learning and personal growth.

Overarching principles:

There are four overarching principles that shape the teaching and learning in Early Years. These are:

- Every child is a **unique child**, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured
- Children can learn to be strong and independent through **positive relationships.**
- Children learn and develop well in **enabling environments**, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.
- Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.

The Unique Child

At **Shalford Infant & Nursery School**, we acknowledge that every child is a **unique individual**, bringing their own personality, interests, and ideas to our learning environment. We understand that each child is a **capable learner**, and we respect the fact that they will develop in **individual ways and at varying rates**. Our approach is tailored to support the individual journey of every child.

By recognising and valuing the uniqueness of each child, we aim to create an environment where they feel respected, supported, and motivated to explore, learn, and grow at their own pace.

Positive Relationships:

At Shalford Infant & Nursery School, we recognise that trust and mutual respect form the foundation of effective learning. We are committed to building caring, supportive, respectful, and professional relationships with all the children in our care. By fostering these strong bonds, we ensure that each child feels valued, safe, and listened to, which is crucial for their emotional well-being and ability to thrive in a learning environment.

We also understand the vital role that a positive partnership with parents and carers plays in a child's development. By working closely with families, we create a collaborative home-school partnership, which has a profound impact on children's learning, development, and overall success. This open communication

and shared responsibility help reinforce the child's experience at school and provide consistency and support in their growth.

In fostering these relationships, we aim to create a nurturing community where every child can flourish, both academically and personally.

Enabling environment:

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The EYFS Curriculum:

The EYFS Curriculum is organised into seven areas of learning and development that are interconnected**,** providing a holistic approach to early childhood education.

The Prime Areas:

These are fundamental to a child's development and are essential for success in all other areas:

- **Personal, Social and Emotional Development**: Fostering children's ability to manage emotions, build relationships, and develop self-awareness.
- **Communication and Language**: Supporting children in developing their listening, speaking, and understanding skills.
- **Physical Development**: Encouraging the development of both gross and fine motor skills, promoting health and physical well-being.

The Specific Areas:

These areas build upon the prime areas and are crucial for developing essential skills:

- **Literacy**: Helping children develop reading and writing skills, including phonics and comprehension.
- **Mathematics**: Introducing children to number concepts, shapes, space, and measures through engaging activities.
- **Understanding the World**: Encouraging exploration and understanding of the world around them, including people, places, technology, and the environment.
- **Expressive Arts and Design**: Promoting creativity through art, music, role play, and other expressive activities.

At **Shalford Infant & Nursery School**, we teach all of these areas through four different approaches:

1. **Child-led**: Children access learning independently via **continuous provision**, exploring and engaging with resources without direct support from an adult.
2. **Child-initiated**: When children show an interest or develop their own ideas, adults enhance this learning through **meaningful interactions**, sharing ideas, and providing relevant resources.

3. **Adult-initiated**: An adult presents an engaging idea to the children, then steps back to observe how they interact and respond, allowing for exploration and independence.
4. **Adult-led**: The adult takes the lead with a specific objective in mind, conducting structured activities such as **carpet sessions**, group times, and planned, adult-directed experiences.

This balanced approach ensures that children at Shalford receive a comprehensive and engaging early years education, allowing them to thrive and develop a love for learning.

Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning:

Underpinning the seven areas of learning are the three Characteristics of Effecting Teaching and Learning which identify some of the ways in which children learn. Staff will seek to observe, promote and assess these within learning.

Playing and exploring – Children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'

- Realise their actions have an effect on the world, so they want to keep repeating them.
- Plan and think ahead about how they will explore and play with objects.
- Guide their own thinking and actions by referring to visual aids or by talking to themselves while playing.
- Make independent choices.
- Bring their own interests and fascinations into their play.
- Respond to new experiences.

Active Learning – Children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy themselves.

- Participate in routines and begin to predict sequences because they know routines.
- Show goal-directed behaviour.
- Begin to correct their mistakes themselves.
- Keep on trying when things get difficult.

Creating and thinking critically – Children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

- Take part in simple pretend play.
- Sort materials.
- Review their progress as they try to achieve their goal. Check how well they are doing.
- Solve real problems.
- Use pretend play to think beyond the 'here and now' and to understand another perspective.
- Know more so they feel confident coming up with their own ideas and make more links between those ideas.
- Concentrate on achieving something that is important to them and becoming increasing able to control their attention and ignore distractions.

Learning through play and continuous provision in the EYFS:

"Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, relate to others, set their own goals, and solve problems. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play and learning that is guided by adults." ('The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage.' DfE Sep 2026).

Through play our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They practise essential skills, build on ideas and learn how to work collaboratively with others through understanding and creating rules, sharing and listening to ideas and managing their emotions and behaviour. The children will have the opportunity to think creatively, investigate and problem solve independently and with their peers. Play allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity, and physical, cognitive, and emotional strength.

Screen Use

At Shalford Infant & Nursery School, we recognise that young children learn best through active, hands-on experiences, meaningful interactions, play and exploration.

We will have regard to the Department for Education's guidance on screen use in early years settings and will ensure that digital devices and screens are used appropriately, purposefully and in ways that support children's learning and development.

Screen use will not replace opportunities for children to play, communicate, explore, be physically active, develop relationships or engage with real-world experiences. Staff will consider the age, stage of development and individual needs of children when deciding whether digital technology is appropriate. Where digital technology is used, adults will provide appropriate supervision and support and will ensure that its use contributes meaningfully to the child's learning experience.

Observation, assessment and planning:

The planning within the EYFS follows each class's Medium Term Plans, which identify the learning and development priorities being focused on each term or half term. These plans are used by the EYFS teacher as a guide for weekly planning; however, teachers adapt planning in response to the needs, achievements, interests and starting points of the children. This responsive approach ensures that teaching builds on what children already know and can do.

At Shalford Infant & Nursery School, we use OPAL Starting Points to identify children's starting points when they join our Early Years provision. This is the school's own starting-point assessment and is completed within the first six weeks of children joining the setting. It provides information about how each child has settled, their interests, strengths and areas for development. This information is shared with parents during the first set of Parent/Teacher consultations and informs our ongoing planning and provision.

In Reception, our OPAL Starting Points assessment is separate from the statutory Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA). The school administers the statutory RBA in accordance with the Department for Education's assessment and administration requirements. The RBA is completed within the required period at the beginning of Reception.

Once the starting-point assessment has been completed, each month there will be ‘Spotlight children’ who are approaching their next set of milestones. The staff team will spend time observing these children in their play and learning and an ‘OPAL Spotlight’ is completed each time children reach the next step of developmental milestones. This supports staff in identifying children's developing knowledge, skills and understanding and planning appropriate next steps.

Every day that we interact and engage with children, we are observing and developing our knowledge of their learning, development, interests and individual needs. Assessment is an integral part of teaching and is used to identify what children know and can do, what they need to learn next and how adults can support their development.

Our assessment is primarily based on professional knowledge and judgement. Staff use observations, interactions, children's independent learning and information shared by parents and carers to build a holistic picture of each child's development. We recognise that extensive written evidence is not required to demonstrate children's progress or support professional judgements.

At Shalford Infant and Nursery School, we have chosen to record observations using labels, which are then attached to each child’s individual *Record of Observations* sheet. This approach enables all staff to record observations in the moment and ensures that these can be shared with the child’s Key Person.
Each observation label will include the date, the child’s name and a brief summary of what was observed. A coloured mark will also be used to indicate the Area of Learning to which the observation relates.

Colour codes for observations and planning		
Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED)	Purple	
Communication and Language (C&L)	Yellow	
Physical Development (PD)	Red	
Mathematics (M)	Blue	
Literacy (L)	Green	
Understanding the World (UtW)	Orange	
Expressive Art and Design (EAD)	Pink	

For children attending our Nursery, we recognise the importance of the statutory two-year progress check. The progress check is completed when a child is aged between two and three years and reviews the child's progress in the three prime areas of learning: Communication and Language, Physical Development and Personal, Social and Emotional Development. The check is based on our ongoing knowledge and observations of the child, together with information shared by parents and carers. Where appropriate, we will work in partnership with parents/carers and relevant professionals to identify appropriate support and agree next steps.

At the end of Reception, teachers make a judgement against the Early Learning Goals (ELGs). The ELGs are not a curriculum and are not used to limit children's learning experiences. They are used to make a holistic assessment of children's development at the end of the EYFS.

At the end of the school year, those leaving Nursery and those finishing the Reception Year get a written report sharing their child's learning and progress. In Reception this includes sharing children's achievements against the Early Learning Goals (ELGs). We give a reasonable opportunity for the parents to discuss these judgements with the EYFS teacher. For the children that are remaining in Nursery, we offer another parent/teacher consultation in the Summer term.

Inclusion:

In our school we strongly believe that all children are unique and are valued. We strive to give all of our children every opportunity to achieve regardless of ability, ethnicity, race, culture, religious affiliation, gender, gender identity or sexual orientation. We ensure we take into consideration individual children's life experiences and needs when we are planning their learning.

In the EYFS, we set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of our children, so that most achieve the ELGs by the end of the key stage. Some children progress beyond this point. We help them do this by planning to meet the needs of both boys and girls, of children with special educational needs, of children who are more able, of children with disabilities, of children from all social and cultural backgrounds, of children from different ethnic groups, and of those from diverse linguistic backgrounds.
We aim to meet the needs of all our children through:

- Planning opportunities that build on and extend the children's knowledge, experience and interests, and develop their self-esteem and confidence.
- Using a variety of teaching strategies that are based on children's learning styles and needs.
- Providing a wide range of opportunities to motivate and support children, and to help them to learn effectively.
- Offering a safe and supportive learning environment, in which the contribution of all children is valued.
- Using resources that reflect diversity, and that avoid discrimination and stereotyping.
- Inspiring our children to learn from each other and through the whole school community.
- Monitoring children's progress, and providing support from outside agencies as necessary.
- Teaching our school values that encourage respect, tolerance and kindness.

Parents as partners:

We recognise that parents are children's first and most enduring educators and we value the contribution they make. We recognise the role that parents have played, and their future role, in educating their children. We work closely with families by:

- Offering home visits to new Nursery children and children who are joining Reception from another setting. We also speak to children's Nursery and Pre-school setting for those starting in Reception year.
- Giving children and families the opportunity to meet their class teacher prior to starting school through Stay and Play sessions.
- Holding 'Meet the Teacher' and 'Curriculum Meetings' to share important information with parents and carers.
- Sharing children's learning through social media posts on 'X'.
- We have an 'Open door policy' where we are happy to meet with parents to discuss their child's learning and any concerns.
- We make ourselves available before and after school at 'pick up' and 'drop off times' for any queries, arranging of meetings and information sharing when needed.
- We hold Parent/Teacher Consultations during the Autumn and Spring term.
- Arranging school events that parents and carers are invited to, such as, Christmas performances, Easter concerts. Sport's day.
- We often invite parent helpers on school trips.
- At the end of each half term in Reception parents are invited in to see their child's Learning Journey folder.
- Holding family learning sessions where parents are invited to see lessons and spend time learning with their child.
- In Reception, teachers and parents leave comments regarding their child's reading.

At our school, the Reception teacher acts as the 'Key Person' for all of the children in their class. In Nursery children are assigned a 'Key Person' and they keep the Class Teacher informed about the learning, development and next steps for their 'Key Children' through regular meetings and conversations.

Safer Eating

At Shalford Infant & Nursery School, we recognise that eating and drinking are important aspects of children's health, development and wellbeing. We aim to provide a safe, positive and supportive environment in which children can develop healthy eating habits and increasing independence.

In Nursery, children will be appropriately supervised whenever they are eating or drinking. Children will be seated safely in an appropriately sized chair while eating.

Children will always be within sight and hearing of a member of staff while eating. Where possible, a member of staff will sit facing the children so that they can closely supervise them, identify any signs of choking, prevent food sharing and be aware of any unexpected allergic reactions.

There will always be a member of staff in the room with a valid full-course paediatric first aid certificate while children are eating.

Staff will be aware of each child's individual developmental needs and will provide appropriate support where children require assistance with eating, using utensils or managing food.

Food will be prepared in a way that is appropriate for the child's age and stage of development and in a way that prevents choking**.** Staff will follow current guidance on preparing food safely for young children. Parents and carers will provide information about their child's dietary requirements, allergies, intolerances and any medical or additional needs that may affect eating and drinking. This information will be kept up to date and shared appropriately with staff responsible for the child.

Where a child has a known allergy or intolerance, appropriate arrangements will be put in place to reduce the risk of exposure. Where necessary, an allergy action plan, healthcare plan and/or risk assessment will be completed.

In Reception, children will continue to be appropriately supervised while eating and drinking. Children will be seated safely while eating and will always remain within sight and hearing of a member of staff.
As children develop greater independence, they will be supported to manage appropriate aspects of their mealtime routines, such as opening food containers, using utensils and managing their own food, where

this is developmentally appropriate. However, increasing independence will not reduce the level of supervision required while children are eating.

There will always be a member of staff in the room with a valid full-course paediatric first aid certificate while children are eating.

Staff will remain alert to the risk of choking and allergic reactions and will ensure that food is prepared and presented in a way that prevents choking.

Safer Sleep

At Shalford Infant & Nursery School, we recognise the importance of providing a safe, comfortable and appropriate environment for children who need to sleep or rest.

Children who require a daytime nap will sleep in a designated, quiet and comfortable sleep area within the Nursery environment. The area will be kept clean, well maintained and free from hazards that could present a risk to children. Sleeping arrangements will be appropriate to each child's age, stage of development and individual needs.

Children will be placed down to sleep safely and on a suitable sleep surface with appropriate bedding. Sleeping children will be frequently checked to ensure that they are safe. Staff will remain alert to the child's position, breathing, temperature and general wellbeing while they are sleeping.

The sleep area will be arranged so that staff can supervise children effectively and carry out regular checks. Staff will know which children are sleeping and will remain aware of their whereabouts at all times. Children will not be left unsupervised in a sleep area.

Any medical, developmental or additional needs that affect a child's sleep will be discussed with parents and carers and appropriate arrangements will be put in place. Where necessary, an individual risk assessment or healthcare plan will be completed.

Any concerns or incidents relating to a child's sleep will be recorded and managed in accordance with the school's safeguarding and health and safety procedures. Parents and carers will be informed of any significant concerns relating to their child's sleep or wellbeing while sleeping.

Monitoring and review

This policy is monitored by the Head Teacher, The EYFS Lead and the Governing Body, and will be reviewed bi-annually.

This Policy links to our other policies and procedures:

- Assessment Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Equalities Policy
- Feedback Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Intimate Care Policy
- Medical Conditions Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- SEND Policy
- Food Hygiene and Safer Eating procedures
- First Aid procedures
- Staff Recruitment and Safer Recruitment procedures
- Values Policy